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speaking out

The Newsletter of Catholics Speak Out

A Program of the Quixote Center

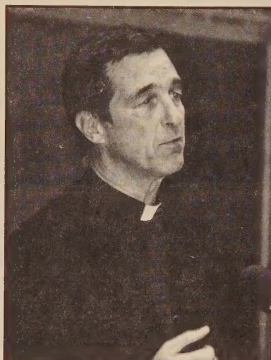
May/June 1999

Faith Matters: A New Way of Speaking Out

Imagine tuning in your radio and hearing that your favorite talk show will soon feature discussions of topics such as:

- Was Jesus married? (A conversation with Anthony Padovano)
- Kosovo and the Balkans: What are moral choices?
- Women as priests, ministers and rabbis
- Is God an environmentalist?
- Gay and lesbian marriage: A religious possibility or contradiction?
- Noisy Contemplation: Prayer for busy people
- Should clergy run for public office?
- The death penalty: A moral option?
- Jubilee 2000 and debt forgiveness
- *Women and Redemption*: An interview with Rosemary Radford Ruether

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Joseph Fessio, SJ



Maureen Fiedler, SL

Photos: Marie Clarke

Shame On Eve!

CSO Coordinator Takes on Joseph Fessio, SJ, in Debate on Women's Ordination

By Timothy Scanlon,
CSO Advisory Board Member

Did you know that the "original sin" in the Garden of Eden was that Eve acted too much like a man? And Adam "acted like a woman instead of a man" by refusing to "exercise his legitimate authority" when confronted by Eve? These "creative" theological insights were offered by Joseph Fessio, SJ, during a debate with CSO Coordinator Maureen Fiedler, SL, on the subject of women's ordination at Georgetown University on March 25, Feast of the Annunciation.

About 250 people attended this standing-room-only event. About half were followers of Fessio from various right-wing groups in the Washington metropolitan area. Others, largely from the Quixote Center, Women's Ordination Conference and CTA of Northern Virginia, were supporters of Fiedler. A few were students who wanted to hear both viewpoints and make up their minds.

The debate question was, "Can a woman receive the sacraments of orders?"

J. Augustine DiNoia, OP, staff for the doctrine committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, moderated the event. He opened with a quotation from Pope John Paul II, laying out the current teaching of the church, "...I declare that the church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women, and that this judgment is to

be definitively held by all the church's faithful."

Rev. DiNoia stunned the audience, however, by announcing that many Catholics believe *mistakenly* that this subject cannot be discussed publicly. Debates such as the one that evening, he said, were important to "come to an understanding of the gift that Holy Orders is to the church."

In her opening, Fiedler described the two world views that usually underlie the views of opponents and proponents: the patriarchal world view and the egalitarian world view. The former, she noted, treats gender roles as "complementary," i.e., not equal, not shared, not mutual. The latter, on the other hand, sees women and men as fundamentally equal with social roles "mutually shared" and limited only by one's talents and imagination.

She declared the debate question "curious," because it seemed to ques-

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Rev. DiNoia stunned the audience... by announcing that many Catholics believe *mistakenly* that this subject cannot be discussed publicly. Debates such as this one, he said, are important to understanding Holy Orders.

An Editorial:

Corpus Christi: A Sign of the Future?

The Story of Corpus Christi Parish

In 1976, *Corpus Christi Parish* in the inner city of Rochester, NY, was dying. It had about 200 members when the diocese sent Rev. James Callan there as pastoral administrator. During 22 years of ministry and decision-making shared with the people, it grew into a vibrant faith community of more than 3,000. Parishioners gave flesh to church teaching on social justice with a large network of social outreach ministries serving the poor and those on the margins of society.

But, in August 1998, Bishop Matthew Clark, probably under Vatican pressure, dismissed Jim Callan as pastoral administrator because Callan 1) had allowed women to minister at the altar in ways that appeared "priestly," 2) welcomed gay and lesbian people as equals in the parish and blessed gay and lesbian unions, and 3) invited those of other faith traditions to receive communion. For *Corpus Christi* parishioners, these are issues of justice at the heart of church renewal – issues of conscience.

The community of *Corpus Christi* protested Callan's dismissal strongly. In October, Mary Ramerman, the associate pastor, was fired for not agreeing to move away from the altar during services; she believed that doing so would send a negative signal to women. On December 7, Callan was formally suspended from the priesthood, forbidden to say Mass or administer the sacraments. On December 14, six lay staff, many of whom had been with the parish for years, were fired. Other lay staff resigned in solidarity.

Amidst the rubble of their former parish, hundreds of people from *Corpus Christi* wanted to continue to live their ideals, pray together and keep their faith alive. They formed the New Faith Community and began to hold regular Catholic worship services.

On February 24, 1999, the Diocese of Rochester announced that Callan and the members of the community associ-

ated with him had "excommunicated themselves" from the Roman Catholic Church. In the March 4 edition of the diocesan paper, Bishop Matthew Clark said that "he had no plans to formally excommunicate anyone in the new community," and the previous statements were made to "make clear the seriousness of this new action" (i.e., the formation of a new community).

by Maureen Fiedler, SL

For most church reformers, the story of *Corpus Christi* Parish sounds like a repeat of what we've been hearing for years: progressive parishioners are persecuted by the bishop, forced to make difficult choices and form a new "intentional community."

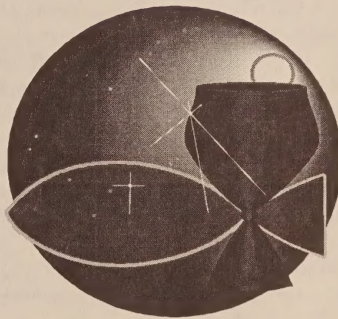
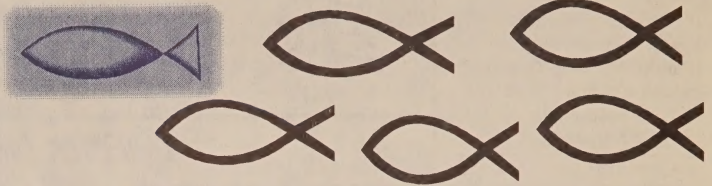
But there's far more to this story. First, Bishop Matthew Clark of Rochester is no conservative. He has a long and respected progressive record on issues involving women in ministry, gay and lesbian people and ecumenical relations. Women preach commonly throughout the diocese. Many parishes, although they don't do gay and lesbian partnership services, openly welcome gay and lesbian members. In many places, those not Catholic reportedly feel comfortable receiving communion. Right-wing groups have been on Clark's tail for years because he permits all this. Progressive Catholics generally want Clark to remain as long as possible; he has many supporters among church reformers.

In the course of this burgeoning national controversy, I've talked to people who support Bishop Clark. They are good, honest and sincere. Many are critical of *Corpus Christi* for not trying all options, for not compromising on the issues, for taking their case to the national media and for various and sundry other mistakes – either by individuals or the community.

I've also talked extensively to the *Corpus Christi* parishioners who now form the New Faith Community. They too are good, honest and sincere people. They are critical of the diocese for repressive methods, for demanding that they compromise their ideals as the price for maintaining the parish as it was, for firing people without cause or severance pay and for various and sundry other mistakes – either by individuals or diocesan officials.

Both sides describe this as a tragedy. Undoubtedly, both made mistakes. In their best moments, both admit to mistakes. But the crux of the problem is *structural*, not individual. In fact, the core problem is not even in Rochester. It is in Rome. Vatican policies treat women as second class, alienate gay and lesbian people and fail to follow through on the ecumenical promises of Vatican II. Most observers believe that Bishop

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Shame on Eve!

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tion the humanity of women. "Are women human beings – really?" she queried. "If we are, of course we can be ordained," she said, quoting from the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. Then she outlined several major reasons why the good of the church demands women's ordination. She turned traditional arguments on their head, citing Scripture, tradition and the need for a complete imaging of Christ as reasons for women's ordination. (See article on pp. 4-5 for excerpts from her opening remarks).

Fessio began his opening statement by lauding Mary's obedience "to an idea that she could not understand." He declared that "the teaching of the church does not depend on human wisdom...It is a genuine revelation that comes from God." Presumably he intended to imply that women (and men) today who wish to emulate Mary are those who are willing to obey policies they do not understand, and which might seem averse to human wisdom.

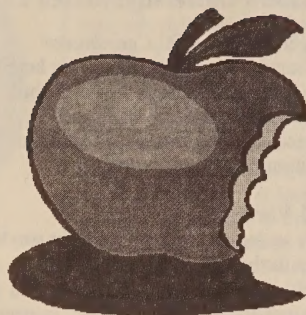
Fessio asserted that the church's 2,000-year tradition points to a "calm reception of the fact that the church does not consider herself [sic] authorized to depart from this tradition," even if there were some attempt to ordain a woman priest or deaconess. He did not, however, address directly the recent research cited by Fiedler, showing that women in the early church filled priestly roles, and that Ludmila Javarova was ordained a priest in Czechoslovakia when it was under communism.

Fessio based much of his position on his theology of the Trinity. "Given the creation...it would be impossible for God to be referred to as anything but 'Father,'" he said. "The biological fact [of the difference between the genders] is a natural symbol which God used in creation to give us an idea of how he was the Father who spoke into the void which received that word and came into being. So creation of man and woman is not just for procreation, not just for union, it's also for natural symbolism."

Ours is a *relationship* God, he stressed. "Being receptive, being obedient," and dependent on another person "is not a diminishment in your dignity," he noted as he outlined the role of the Second and Third Persons of the Trinity. He said that the Trinity was an example of *both* hierarchy and equality. He also argued that the Trinity was a patriarchy, and "so [the scriptures] talk about God as 'Father,' God as 'king.'" He never explained how two contradictory ideas (hierarchy/patriarchy and equality) could be present simultaneously, except to assert that it was a "mystery."

Later, one witty male questioner from the audience mused about what it would be like if he (behaving like Fessio's traditional male) "spoke into the void" that night. "She would say, 'I think The Void has a headache,'" he surmised, conveying his own astonishment that any man would even consider referring to a woman in such terms.

Fessio never answered Fiedler's contention, traditional and fundamental in Catholic theology, that God is beyond all knowing and all limits. In this view, imagery is an aid to



understanding, but it cannot be reified. To speak of God as Father or Mother or burning bush – or whatever – is just that: mere imagery. It cannot be confused with the essence of God.

Fessio then launched into his theology of original sin: Eve acted like a man by "grasping" the fruit (daring to be assertive and make her own choices, perhaps?), and Adam acted like a woman, by "refusing to exercise his legitimate authority" (which, presumably, belongs to males). Fessio did acknowledge that this position is controversial and "needs discussion." Many in audience evidently found it humorous, if not astonishing, as well.

The interchange that followed focused on many of Fiedler's questions about women in church leadership. Although Fessio maintained that chancery offices are full of women, he had to acknowledge that no women are bishops (i.e., run chancery offices). And when asked if women were present when Cardinal Ratzinger visited the United States recently and met with a group of bishops who then issued a statement on women, Fessio turned to Augustine DiNoia – who was present at that meeting – and who confirmed that no, no women were there.

The evening ended with questions from the audience, but even after it concluded, conversations about the debate continued for days – at Georgetown and elsewhere.

If I may conclude with a brief editorial comment, I left the debate somewhat euphoric – not just because I agree with Maureen, and she did very well. I realized that if Fessio is the best that the Catholic Right has to offer, it won't be too long before we see women celebrants in our parishes!

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Opening Remarks (Excerpts) Debate on Women's Ordination

Georgetown University: March 25, 1999

by Maureen Fiedler, SL, CSO Coordinator

Good evening. I am delighted to be here tonight... to speak for the equality of women in the Catholic Church.

This is the Worldwide Day of Prayer for Women's Ordination... proclaimed by Women's Ordination Worldwide, a global coalition on six continents.

Two World Views

I begin by laying out the two different world views that generally form the backdrop for opinions on this subject... the common world views of most opponents and proponents, which I call a patriarchal and egalitarian, respectively.

The patriarchal world view assumes that the Spirit inspires the church from the top down. The pope, cardinals and bishops make all major decisions. They are ordained to rule, and others to obey. The People of God have no fundamental role in decision-making or voice in choosing leadership. The "church is not a democracy," and never can be. Doctrine is solid and unchanging. When Rome speaks, the case is closed. To protect the church from error, those who disagree with this established order are often punished – not



Photo: Marie Clarke

burned at the stake, as once was true, but threatened with silencing, loss of status or positions within the church.

The patriarchal view also holds that women and men have different roles in life determined by gender. This is often called "complementarity." In this model, some roles are closed to women – such as priesthood – and others control the rest of life, such as motherhood. (The same control, may I say, is never applied to fatherhood).

In this world view, men's roles tend to be active, public, authoritative and dominant. Women's roles tend to be passive, private, auxiliary and even submissive. But proponents of this world view open *speaking* of women's roles in exalted terms. They even proclaim a belief in equality, but quickly add that men and women are "different" in ways that stretch far beyond their biology. Women's roles are called "special" or "blessed," and sometimes "more important" than men's. This rhetoric obscures the fact that these gender roles are not equal, not shared and not mutual.

The egalitarian world view, on the other hand, presumes that the Spirit inspires the entire community of faith, not

merely pope and bishops. The laity are responsible adults who develop their views, *not* because someone imposes a position, but because they are *persuaded* that a teaching makes sense, that it is right and just. When it doesn't, they question. Even sacrosanct topics are open to dialogue, because that is how adults learn. When dissenters are punished, it is often seen as a chilling attempt at mind control.

Egalitarians favor broad participation in decision-making, ultimately a church that is a discipleship of equals. Church teachings are not etched in stone; change is healthy. Otherwise, the church would be a fossil. Indeed, many official positions on important issues such as slavery, ecumenism and religious freedom, for example, have changed dramatically over the centuries.

The egalitarian worldview also holds that women and men are fundamentally equal. Our biology is different, but biology does not define our lives. Men cannot bear children, and women cannot be sperm donors. But beyond strictly biological roles, only our imaginations and our talents limit our choices. Our social roles are *not* different and complimentary; they are mutually shared. "Separate but equal" or "different but equal" is *not* equal.

In my own experience, I my grandmother once told me that I could be a mother, a nurse, a teacher or a store clerk. Period. Luckily I listened to my father, who, when I told him I wanted to be a nurse, asked simply, "Why don't you think about being a doctor?" He broke me free of a constricting mentality. I rejoice that men today can choose to be engineers or homemakers, and women can aspire to being teachers or senators, or even – dare I say it? – Archbishop of Washington.

The Debate Question

The question this evening is simply, "Can women receive the Sacrament of Orders?" It's a curious phrasing. It's like asking, "If we lay hands on her, will it 'take'?" If we pronounce the words, will anything happen? Will she really be a priest?

The question focuses what it means to be a woman. To put it baldly: Are women human beings, *really*? Are we created in the image of God? Are we baptized Christians redeemed by Christ? **If we are, of course we can be ordained.** If we are not, then what are we? Puppy dogs? A different species of human? A different type of Christian? For if we are different in a fundamental way, then we are not equal to men. And that, my friends, is not the model of Jesus, nor is it the solemn teaching of our church as expressed at the Second Vatican Council:

"All women and men are endowed with a rational soul and are created in God's image; they have the

Speaking Out is a publication of Catholics Speak Out, a program of the Quixote Center, an international justice and peace center based in Brentwood, MD, near Washington, DC.

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same nature and origin and, being redeemed by Christ, they enjoy the same divine calling and destiny; there is here a basic equality between all and it must be accorded ever greater recognition. ...any kind of social or cultural discrimination in basic personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social conditions, language or religion must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design. It is deeply to be deplored that these basic personal rights are not yet being respected everywhere, as is the case with women who are denied the chance freely to choose a husband or a state of life..." Vatican II, *Church in the Modern World*, #29

To say that women cannot be ordained flies in the face of such teaching.

The Good of Our Church Demands It

And so, I submit to you not only that women *can* receive the Sacrament of Orders, they have the right to have their vocation tested. And the good of our church demands it. Why?

a. First, the Christian theology of the human person, as we've already discussed, teaches that women are full human persons, made in the image of God.

b. Second, without women in the priesthood, Christ is imaged in an incomplete way. Christ assumed, and redeemed, humanity, *not* maleness. That means women *and* men can image Christ, and this does *not* equate to physical likeness. It means filling the roles that Christ filled: works of mercy and justice, leadership, decision-making, sacramental ministry, preaching, healing. If a person cannot see Christ when a woman preaches or breaks bread or leads the church, the problem is not with the woman, but with the *deficient imagination of the person observing!*

Now some claim that the image of Christ as bridegroom and church as bride means a male must represent Christ as bridegroom. This is a beautiful image expressing the love of Christ for the community, but it is a distortion to take it in a literal sexual sense. Many analogies express Christ's love for the church. Why is this one controlling? Jesus, for example, used the image of a mother hen with chicks. I wonder what gender the priest might be if we used that one! But in the end, all such arguments are merely analogies. Analogies are only images; we cannot deify them and use them to determine church policy.

c. Third, to limit ordination to men is to limit God and sacralize masculinity. That is idolatry. Catholic theology teaches that God is beyond knowing, beyond classifications of race, gender, etc. Language is merely a tool to image a God who cannot be expressed in images. To make God literally "male" is to confuse the essence of God with a



Graphic by Design Savant

mere word image. To say God cannot call women as well as men is to limit God's will. To make the maleness of Jesus a controlling element in imaging him is to confuse Jesus' maleness, which is *incidental*, with his humanity, which is *fundamental* to his redemptive role.

d. Fourth, Catholic teaching on justice demands that we eliminate sinful and oppressive discrimination. Our understanding of social sin evolves over time. It took 19 centuries for the church to condemn slavery. It took more than 20 centuries to recognize officially that sex discrimination is sinful and deeply harmful to women. The signs of our times today cry out that women, much more than men, suffer from poverty, illiteracy, violence and even death *because* they are women. A church that denies ordination to women participates in this sin because it tacitly sanctifies the very system of sexist thought that underlies these gross injustices worldwide.

e. Fifth, Jesus modeled gender equality in his dealings with women. He called both women and men to ministry, commissioning Mary of Magdala to preach, for example. He did not "ordain" anyone, man or woman. The notion of priesthood evolved over time; it was not until the second or third century that it began to resemble what we know today. "But what about the '12' and the Last Supper?" you may ask. Contemporary biblical scholarship emphasizes that Jesus was a Jew, leading a reform within Judaism that only later became a Christian movement, and then a church. The "12" in this context were symbolic of the 12 tribes of Israel, Jesus' way of saying that all Jews were a part of the New Covenant he was establishing. And the Last Supper? First, we don't have the guest list for the upper room. And none of the gospels says that *only* the "12" were there. We *do* know that it was a Jewish Passover Seder, a family meal that usually includes women and children. But whoever was present, why do the words, "Take this and eat" apply to everyone, while "Do this in memory of me" applies only to males or the 12? The early Christian community applied these words to everyone. It's time we did the same.

f. Sixth, ordaining women reflects our finest tradition, too long buried. Scripture tells us that women were deaconesses, preachers, missionaries, and leaders of the early church. New research shows that women in early centuries led house churches and presided at the table of the Eucharist, roles we understand as priestly.

Even Pope Gelasius, in the fifth century, complained that such practices still existed! His view reflects the patriarchal side of a struggle over the roles of women that characterized those first centuries. That theology, reinforced by

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Opening Remarks of the Debate

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the culture of imperial Rome, ultimately dominated Christianity. But egalitarian practices flourished in many places for centuries, and we are uncovering them only today.

And in our own time, women are ordained in other Christian churches, including the Episcopal Church, which has a concept of priesthood similar to our own. And when Czechoslovakia was under communism, a woman named Ludmila Javorova was ordained a priest by a *bona fide* Catholic bishop to serve the Czech underground church. Sadly, the Vatican refuses to recognize her heroic service as a priest for almost 20 years. But it's time to welcome Ludmila and celebrate our egalitarian tradition that has been buried by sexism all these centuries.

g. Seventh, the faithful support the ordination of women, and the pastoral needs of the church today demand it. The "canonical doctrine of reception," an ancient part of our tradition, says that for a law to be an effective guide for the believing community, it must be "received" by that community. Quite clearly, the male-only priesthood is not a "received" doctrine. Polls in the United States, Canada and Europe have shown consistently that 62 to 71 percent of all Catholics favor women priests. Moreover, there is a severe and worsening shortage of male, celibate priests. Parishes are closing everywhere even though women and married people stand ready to serve as priests. We need the talents of these people, not only because justice demands it, but to avoid a Eucharistic famine.

In closing, I'd like you to imagine a young woman here at Georgetown. She is prayerful and cares deeply about her church. She takes theology electives and wants to study more. She has designed and led prayer rituals with creativity and care. Her friends seek her out for counsel and advice. Not surprisingly, she feels called to priesthood and wants to serve fully. She is the gifted Catholic woman about whom we speak tonight. I ask all of you: will you give her a stone when she asks for bread? I say it is time that she breaks the bread so that we all can share fully in the legacy of Christ.

Corpus Christi Editorial

continued from p. 2

Clark felt pressure to enforce those policies, even if he questions some of them himself. Corpus Christi Parish, on the other hand, was doing what the Vatican itself should have done if it had taken Vatican II seriously. In this, the community lived at the prophetic edge, calling our church to live its finest ideals.

More than that, the New Faith Community has emerged as a new way of being Catholic in an age of repression. In some ways, it is like an "intentional eucharistic community," but not totally.

There are hundreds of "intentional communities" in the United States. Some were formed simply because Catholics wanted worship that is more egalitarian, inclusive, creative or intimate than the fare offered by regular parishes. But many formed because conflicts with church authorities drove people to create alternatives. Most Dignity¹ communities, expelled from Catholic churches, have done that. So have groups that wanted inclusive language, married priest presiders, women leading services, or whatever. Except for Dignity groups, most of these communities are small (fewer than 50 people), don't advertise services, and want to remain unobtrusive.

The New Faith Community is a bit like the latter, but it is not small, and not quiet. The controversy out of which it was born makes that impossible. It has also faced a threat of

...stay tuned to Rochester. Perhaps, because it is public, the New Faith Community will provide all of us with a powerful beacon for the church to come.

excommunication, although diocesan pronouncements are ambiguous on this question. But whatever the diocese intends, the community continues to define itself as Catholic. It does not choose to see itself as "excommunicated."

So whatever mistakes were made, the New Faith Community has made a *structural* decision to stand by its ideals of equality, welcoming and inclusiveness. In a choice between law and conscience, it followed Catholic teaching and chose conscience.² Undoubtedly, it will also continue its remarkable outreach to the poor of Rochester. These are powerful signs of the Spirit and the message of the gospel. We need to stay tuned to Rochester. Perhaps because it is public, the New Faith Community will provide all of us with a powerful beacon for the church to come.

¹Dignity is the organization of gay and lesbian Catholics and their supporters. Many Dignity chapters offer regular eucharistic worship.

²Vatican II said, "All are bound to follow their conscience faithfully in every sphere of activity... the individual must not be forced to act against conscience nor be prevented from acting according to conscience, especially in religious matters." (*Declaration on Religious Liberty*, #3).

A Review of:

Praying with Women of the Bible

by Bridget Mary Meehan (Liguori, 1998). \$12.95.

Do you sometimes wish you had a book to recommend to women (or men) in parishes who are just beginning to question the church's policies toward women? Look no further. *Praying With Women of the Bible* is it.

It re-tells the stories of Sarah, Hagar, Miriam, Deborah, Ruth, Esther, Judith, the Samaritan woman, Martha, the woman with the flow of blood, the Canaanite woman, Mary of Magdala, the woman who anointed Jesus' head, Jesus' mother Mary, Phoebe, Prisca (Priscilla), Lydia, Thecla and Mary, the mother of John Mark as they are related in Scripture. But the author does not portray them as passive, subservient women. She emphasizes their powerful, assertive, prophetic attributes in the midst of the patriarchal and oppressive structures that dominated biblical times, and offers them as role models for contemporary women. She also provides a few interpretations of each woman's story by well known biblical scholars.

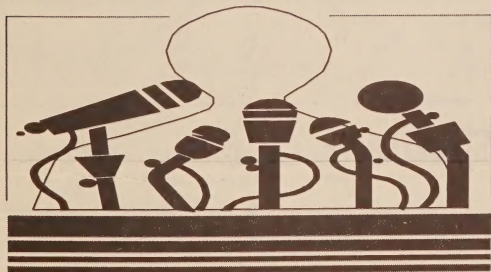
The book is meant for either individual contemplation or group prayer and discussion. Each chapter concludes with discussion questions and a section called "prayer experience" which calls on the reader to use a variety of prayer techniques, many of them "right brained."

It's a rich resource, not only for prayer, but for getting acquainted with these important women.



Image of a woman in prayerful priestly gesture, from the wall of the Catacomb of St. Priscilla, Rome, Italy.

Faith Matters: Speaking Out in a New Way



continued from p. 1

- Ecumenical views on papal infallibility
- Domsday cults and the new millennium
- African-American approaches to theology
- Life after death: images from various faiths
- and many, many more.

An open, fair-minded discussion of controversial religious issues such as these is sorely needed on today's broadcast spectrum. Some questions are internal to religious denominations, although they often have wider implications. These include issues such as women's ordination in Roman Catholicism or the recent dismissal

of Methodist ministers who performed gay and lesbian partnership services.

Others deal with broad social justice and foreign policy questions, often hottest when theology spills over into public policy. The Pew Center for the People and the Press put it this way:

"Religion is a strong and growing force in the way Americans think about politics. It has a bearing on political affiliation, political values, policy attitudes and candidate choice. Its increasing influence on political opinion and behavior rivals factors such as race, region, age, social class and gender." (News release, 6-25-96).

Faith Matters will feature interviews with religious authors, leaders, newsmakers and ordinary believers on timely and controversial topics, interspersed with call-ins from listeners. It will be popular in presentation and style, assuming that most of the audience does not have sophisticated theological training. It will most likely begin as a regional show in the Washington/Baltimore area, but the ultimate dream is to syndicate it nationally.

Hopefully, *Faith Matters* will become a place on the radio dial to explore the tough religious questions of our age, without assuming there is only one set of right answers. Stay tuned! We'll keep you informed on progress.



A CSO Radio Commentary:

Ecclesiastical McCarthyism: Catholic Education Under Siege

By Maureen Fiedler, SL

Andrew Padovano is a graduate student at Georgetown, the oldest Catholic university in the United States. Like most of the students he knows, he values his faith and the Jesuit heritage of his school, but he worries that recent moves by the Vatican may subvert the openness and academic freedom that make this one of the most prestigious institutions of higher learning in the country. As an alumna of Georgetown, I'm worried, too.

Our concern is well founded. In a quest to strengthen Catholic identity, the Vatican is pressuring the US bishops to impose new norms on Catholic universities. They require that university presidents swear an oath of loyalty to Rome, that bishops approve the appointments of theology professors, and that a majority of faculties and boards of trustees be "faithful Catholics."

These norms are nothing less than a form of ecclesiastical McCarthyism that can destroy hundreds of fine Catholic institutions because they undermine the core mission of education.

Colleges and universities exist to teach students how to acquire knowledge, think for themselves, ask questions and yes – challenge accepted theories and truth. Loyalty oaths to any doctrinal agenda, including the Vatican's, contradict that fundamental mission. So would bishops' interfering in the appointment of theology professors. They would surely

test for doctrinal orthodoxy, driving out creative theologians who push students to think and to question.

But the thorniest standard says that a majority of faculty members and trustees must be "faithful" Catholics. This undermines efforts to promote campus diversity and make non-Catholics feel second class. And what, pray tell, is a "faithful" Catholic?

Would a candidate be asked his or her views on birth control, abortion or women's ordination? Would trustees be quizzed about a divorce or their sexual orientation? Would a professor be asked, "Are you now, or have ever been, a member of NOW or the ACLU or even Call to Action?" This little phrase, "faithful Catholic," has all the potential for a new Inquisition.

Locally, these norms threaten the integrity of Trinity College as well as Georgetown. Unfortunately, Catholic University long ago sacrificed academic freedom to papal control.

The answer to all this? The best I've heard is from Georgetown student Andrew Padovano: "Catholic identity cannot be imposed by decree; it must be thoughtfully learned through dialogue. Georgetown understands this. The Vatican does not."

It's time that the US bishops sent *that* message to Rome. Aired 3-3-99 on WAMU-FM, NPR station in Washington, DC.

Suggestions for Speaking Out

Write an On-Line Review of *Rome Has Spoken*

Want to encourage more people to learn that the church can and does change by reading *Rome Has Spoken*? Write an online review! Go to: <www.amazon.com>, call up *Rome Has Spoken*, and click on reviews. Offer your comments and assessment.

Send a Greeting of Support to the New Faith Community for the Feast of Corpus Christi (June 6)

Send your message of support to:

The New Faith Community
c/o Mary Ramerman
441 Winona Blvd.
Rochester, NY 14617 E-mail: mwhitram@aol.com

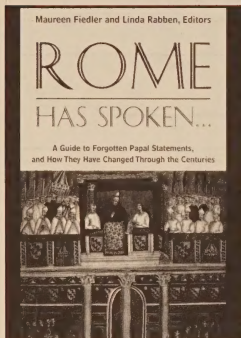
Get Your Local Cable Access Channel to Air *God Talk*

Bridget Mary Meehan (author of *Praying with Women of the Bible*, reviewed above, and many other books) has a regular TV talk show called *God Talk*, filmed in Fairfax, VA. She focuses on issues related to church and women, from a religious feminist perspective.

The show has started to spread to other geographical areas. If you want to suggest this show as a possibility to your local cable access channel, get in touch with Bridget Mary Meehan directly:

Bridget Mary Meehan Phone: 703-379-2487
5856 Glen Forest Drive E-mail: sofiabmm@aol.com
Falls Church, VA 22401

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Thomas Fox, National Catholic Reporter, 12-18-98.



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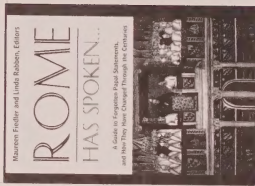
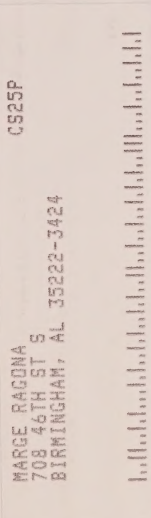
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CATHOLICS SPEAK OUT

May, 1999

Dear Friends,

Greetings and many blessings in this Season of the Spirit. May the work we do together enkindle a new and powerful Spirit of Pentecost in our church and our world!

An Invitation and a New Direction for CSO

We write to invite you to become part of Catholics Speak Out (CSO), a leading organization in the growing international movement for justice in the Roman Catholic Church. We issue this invitation at a special moment. We are launching an exciting new direction for CSO, one that will serve not only the movement for church reform, but also our quest for social justice in the world at large.

That new direction is *Faith Matters*, a religious radio talk show that will provide a forum for speaking out on the issues we care about and struggle with. Our goal is to have it on the air in six to eight months.

The need is clear. Sixty-two percent of US citizens say that religion is "very important" in their lives, and 70 percent claimed membership in a church or synagogue (CNN/USA Today Gallup Poll: June 1998) yet mainstream talk radio rarely covers religion at all. The regular religious voices heard on the broadcast media are almost always representatives of the Religious Right. They offer a combination of Protestant fundamentalist preaching, religious music, interviews with conservative politicians who court their electoral support, and various types of fund-raising. Recently, a group of wealthy Catholics launched the Catholic version of the same thing: a radio network in several major US cities, with plans for programming that will echo the Vatican line on every issue.

What is missing from this picture is a timely, intelligent, non-dogmatic discussion of religious issues. **Our nation needs to hear progressive and moderate religious voices as well as conservative ones.**

We progressive religious people need to move beyond our love affair with the printed word and reach out to the millions of listeners and viewers who get their news and editorial viewpoints from radio and television. That's why I began a couple years ago to do regular commentaries for National Public Radio (NPR) and WAMU-FM, a local NPR affiliate in the Washington, DC area.

Now the time has come to move beyond occasional commentaries and establish a regular talk show. We experimented with a similar idea a couple of years ago and made progress. Now, with your help and support, I am convinced we can get this on the air.

Faith Matters is designed to meet those needs. It will cover a variety of lively and controversial topics, especially where theology intersects with public policy. It will offer in-depth interviews with top-flight theologians and religious newsmakers. It will provide an opportunity for folks like you to call in and speak out.

In short, it will seek to model the kind of faith community we say we want: open, dialogic, respectful of different points of view, struggling with the hard issues.

It will not accept the definition of "religious issues" typical in today's media. It will not assume, for example, that morality equals sexuality. Although it will cover cultural or sexual issues like gay and lesbian rights or abortion, it will often shine a moral spotlight on social justice issues, like the Balkan wars, the death penalty, racism and the environment. It will be interfaith in scope, but will feature regular shows on issues of reform in Roman Catholicism.

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PURSuing A FUTURE OF JUSTICE, PEACE AND EQUALITY

Think of it! You could tune in your radio one day and hear about upcoming features on *Faith Matters*. They might include:

- Does God have a gender, and why does it make a difference?
- Papal infallibility: time to revisit Vatican I?
- Canceling debts of poor nations: the meaning of Jubilee?
- Truth-telling: is it ever permissible to lie?
- Creationism vs. evolution in public schools
- A series in 2000: religious beliefs of the presidential candidates
- What do you actually *do* when you pray? (an interfaith roundtable)
- Religion in the Balkan wars: how significant?
- Gays and lesbians in the ministry: don't ask, don't tell?
- Who decides what's doctrine? Governance in various Christian denominations
- Creation theology and Native Americans

This barely scratches the surface. As the show gets on the air, I will be asking you for program suggestions.

We have consulted several veterans of radio, and our proposal has been fine tuned. We are now launching conversations with several radio stations as we seek a home for the show. This outreach will require a great deal of staff time. We also need to cut a first-rate "pilot," and hire a producer who will help develop the topics, format and guests for the show. These critically important steps require funding.

That's where you come in. **Would you consider a gift of \$50 or more to help launch this important venture?**

CSO's Other Work

This new initiative is an addition to the current work of CSO. *Rome Has Spoken*, our compendium of papal statements showing that change is a hallmark of Catholic history, is a best seller. It went into a second printing after only four months on the market! Reviews in the *National Catholic Reporter*, *Christian Century*, and even a French newsletter called *Parvis* have been very favorable. (If you don't have it on your bookshelf yet, use the enclosed flyer to purchase a copy.) I will be doing focus sessions on the themes of the book at this year's national Call to Action Conference in Milwaukee.

In addition, CSO has been in constant e-mail contact with our colleagues in Europe and Latin America as we plan for another meeting of the International We Are Church Movement (IMWAC) in Rome in October. Anthony Padovano and I will represent the US church reform groups.

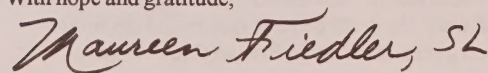
And, as the newsletter details, I recently debated the issue of women's ordination with Joseph Fessio, SJ, at Georgetown University. You will chuckle your way through the recap of the debate by Tim Scanlon in the enclosed newsletter.

Keep the Spirit Alive

To keep the spirit of hope alive, and to launch *Faith Matters* as soon as possible, we need your generous support. **Your gift will do more than underwrite church reform efforts; it will contribute to the enhancement of our whole public dialogue on religious, ethical, theological, biblical and moral issues.** Those who give \$100 or more will receive a complimentary copy of *Rome Has Spoken*.

We will keep you posted on our progress with *Faith Matters*. With your help, we'll give voice to a new Spirit on the airwaves!

With hope and gratitude,



Maureen Fiedler, SL
National Coordinator, Catholics Speak Out



WOMEN:

Church shouldn't marginalize them

From Page 1B

In the last chapter of the letter to the Romans, Paul commends a woman as a church leader using a word that eventually became a church office. He also acknowledges a husband-and-wife evangelistic team who have a church meeting in their house.

We might also want to take into account Jesus, who had a little something to do with the founding of Christianity. Jesus had women traveling with him and allowed them to help fund his work. Jesus also allowed a woman to sit at his feet — the traditional place and posture of a disciple.

And we can't overlook the fact it was women who first announced the Resurrection to the men. Thank goodness no one was around telling them to keep silent and stop

instructing the men on what they had seen.

Of course, all this silencing of women in the church is as much about cultural changes in our society as it is theology. During World War II, women entered the work force in large numbers out of necessity. The men were at war, and women were needed to build ships and planes. By 1950, women represented more than 30 percent of the work force. Today, they are more than half of the total labor force in America.

Many conservative Christian leaders have long argued that working women are the cause of what they see as the breakdown of the American family. The only way to save the family is to get those women back home.

But by seeking to silence women in the church and asserting that women must be submissive to male authority, the church is doing what it has done so many times in the past — marginalizing a segment of the human community. We've done it to ra-

cial and religious minorities, and we continue doing it to women.

There's a sad irony at work in all this. If there is one thing consistent in the message of Jesus, it's that God has a bias for marginal people. Jesus called them "the least of these," and suggested our faith will be evaluated on the basis of how we treat them. And while women are not specifically mentioned in the list Jesus offers, his own pattern of relating to women is consistent with the way he related to other oppressed people in his day.

In America, religious groups are not bound by the laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, gender or age. We are free to exclude anyone for any reason. But we might want to tread carefully here. The people we exclude may be the very people God is reaching out to. And the voices we silence may be the very voices God wants heard.

It would not be the first time it happened that way.



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Excluding women isn't a good idea

By JAMES L. EVANS

In 2002, Sheri Klouda was hired by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, to teach Hebrew. Four years after that, she was denied tenure and removed from her teaching position.

There was no problem with her teaching ability or even her conservative credentials. Klouda attended Criswell College, a Baptist school named after the legendary Baptist preacher, W.A. Criswell. No, the problem was not her teaching skills or her theology. She was removed from the faculty because she is a woman.

Of course, she was a woman when she was hired, and she continued to be a woman throughout her time at Southwestern. What changed for Klouda were the rules. When Paige Patterson became president of the seminary in 2003, he instituted a policy which prohibits women from teaching theology to men.

This idea is rooted in a scriptural passage found in the book of I Timothy. Here is the full text as found in the New International Version: "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent."

Patterson and others in Southern Baptist life have determined that these words are applicable for all churches for all time.

And there's more. Patterson and others are not content just silencing women in the church. The seminary now offers a course for women on Christian homemaking. The idea here is to "prepare women to model the characteristics of the godly woman."

Apparently, the only way a woman can be godly is in the kitchen.

One problem with all this is that the New Testament seems to be at odds with itself on the role of women. For instance, in one place, Paul writes that there is no longer any male or female — that all people are equal in Christ. In another place, he writes that women should be silent in church, but three chapters before that, in the same letter, he instructs women on the way they should dress when they are preaching.



Langford's taste

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THE ISSUE *Our state's leaders ensure a better Alabama by drastically increasing the investment in voluntary prekindergarten program*

Dear Gov. Riley and Alabama lawmakers:

You hold the power to transform Alabama for the better, forever.

You can ensure Alabama's future by spending money on special education, mental health, welfare, prisons and health care. You can ensure higher student achievement in our schools, along with better graduation rates. You can ensure Alabama's adults of tomorrow have better jobs, earn more money and create more tax revenue.

Sound too good to be true? It is. All these things are possible, according to a report from the Southern Regional Education Board. All Alabama has to do is invest in quality prekindergarten programs for its children.

"Studies on prekindergarten dating back to the 1960s make clear the investment in early education, health, social, civic and economic development," SREB President David Spence wrote in a report released Monday. "Increasing funding from sustainable sources, especially as costs rise with enrollment and inflation, are necessary."

So far, you, as elected officials and citizens, haven't found pre-K spending a priority in Alabama.

Right now, the pre-K picture in Alabama is the good news/awful news sort. Alabama is a national leader in setting policies that support early education. The Alabama Department of Education's Institute for Early Education Research is a national leader in high-quality pre-K programs.